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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 5785
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0989
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3797
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5109
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1130
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3243
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2482
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000525

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DEMANDS ACTION ON ALLEGED THREAT TO
U.S. OFFICIALS

REF: KATHMANDU 509

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

1. (C) Nepal media widely reported March 8 that Maoist Supremo Prachanda had alleged during a public rally in western Nepal that royalists were planning to kill U.S. officials in Nepal. In a meeting March 10 with Under Secretary Fore and the Ambassador, Prime Minister Koirala

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emphasized that he would speak with Prachanda about his careless remarks and reiterated the GON's commitment to the security of Embassy personnel. One day earlier, the Ambassador had forcefully requested that Home Minister Sitaula quickly determine the veracity of the Maoist Supremo's claim. The Ambassador insisted to Sitaula that Prachanda share evidence of the plot, if he had any, with the U.S. Mission and the Government of Nepal (GON). If Prachanda had no evidence, the Ambassador strongly urged the Home Minister to issue a statement to that effect. The Ambassador characterized Prachanda's remarks as irresponsible and dangerous. They had given every Maoist cadre with a weapon a license to kill a U.S. official and then blame it on the King's supporters. The Ambassador told Sitaula the U.S. would hold the Maoist leader personally accountable if something happened to U.S. Mission personnel. The Home Minister agreed that Prachanda's comment had been dangerous and ill-advised. He said he would convey the Ambassador's message to the Maoist chief.

Alleged Royalist Plot to Kill U.S. Officials in Nepal

2. (C) Local media began reporting late March 8 that Maoist Supremo Prachanda, at a public gathering of thousands of supporters in Pokhara in western Nepal, had claimed to have evidence that royalists were plotting to kill U.S. officials in Nepal (reftel). The Royal Palace, Prachanda alleged, wanted to use the incident as a ploy to blame the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and thereby ensure the Maoists stayed on the U.S. terrorist list forever. The Maoist chief had added that King Gyanendra was also planning to set off bombs

in the main places of the capital. In response to the alleged threat, the Ambassador convened an Emergency Action Committee (EAC) meeting which recommended several steps to enhance the Mission's security. We also contacted the Prime Minister's Office. The PM instructed Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula to meet with the Ambassador as soon as possible.

Prime Minister Engaged

13. (C) During a March 10 meeting with Under Secretary of State for Management Fore and the Ambassador, Prime Minister G.P. Koirala stressed that he took this alleged threat to his U.S. friends very seriously and that his Government was determined to protect their security. He had found Prachanda's statement in Pokhara to be careless and stupid. Prachanda should, the PM stated, have informed the Government and the Embassy. Koirala promised to tell the Maoist chief that the next time they spoke. The Prime Minister also heard from Under Secretary Fore about the U.S. request for a GON statement in the event Prachanda had no actual proof of a royalist plot. Koirala added that part of the problem was that the Maoist leaders themselves were confused, and were making the people confused. They could not decide whom to criticize. One day it was the King, other days it was India or the United States or the political parties.

Ambassador Demands Threat Be Investigated Quickly

14. (C) In his March 9 meeting with Minister Sitaula, who was joined by Home Secretary Mainali, the Ambassador spoke frankly of the need for urgency in investigating the Maoist leader's claim. The Ambassador emphasized that the duty to

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protect the lives of Mission personnel was his most sacred responsibility as the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal. He took Prachanda's allegation very seriously and wanted to make sure the Home Ministry did the same. It was important to figure out quickly what proof Prachanda had. The Home Minister responded that the Maoist chief had not yet returned to Kathmandu, but that he would meet him the morning of March 10. Sitaula asked the Ambassador what he should tell Prachanda, and what the GON should do, and he would do it.

Evidence To Be Shared; If No Evidence, a Government Statement

15. (C) The Ambassador insisted that, first of all, if the Maoist Supremo had evidence of a murder plot by "rajabadi" (royalists), he had to share it with the Home Ministry and with the U.S. Mission. Prachanda should have, he pointed out, passed on such proof privately before giving his remarks in public. If he had no proof, as the Ambassador suspected was the case, then the Home Ministry or the GON should issue a statement to that effect. The Ambassador conceded that such a statement would be politically difficult for the Government, because so many Nepalis shared the Maoists' suspicion of the Palace and would view any statement as a defense of the monarch. Nevertheless, it was indispensable.

Revoking the License to Kill

16. (C) If left un rebutted, Prachanda's remarks in Pokhara might have dangerous consequences, the Ambassador warned. By claiming the royalists were planning to murder U.S. officials, the Maoist chief had effectively given every hothead with a grievance against the U.S. a license to kill. Meanwhile, Maoist militia were walking unchallenged around Kathmandu with weapons. The Maoists, the Ambassador ventured, were planning to blame any incidents on the Palace. This was unacceptable. The Ambassador told Sitaula to inform Prachanda we would hold the Maoist leader personally

accountable if something happened to any U.S. Mission personnel, including Nepali staff and family members. The Maoist chief also had to tell his cadre there was no open season on Americans. The Ambassador said we were ultimately dependent on the GON for Mission security and expressed his appreciation for the Home Ministry's efforts in that area in the past.

Home Minister Troubled

17. (C) Minister Sitaula wholeheartedly agreed that Prachanda's comments had been dangerous and ill-advised. It had been stupid of the Maoist Supremo to make the claim of a royalist murder plot in a public speech. The Maoist chief, Sitaula concurred, should have told the Prime Minister or the Home Ministry privately if he had such information. The Home Minister complained that the GON was facing problems from both sides -- from royalists who were disturbing the peace in Kathmandu and the Terai and from the Maoists. The Ambassador stated that the Palace was certainly capable of stupidity of its own, as evidenced by the King's Democracy Day speech in February (for which he had been universally pilloried). Until the Government investigation of Prachanda's allegation was complete, the Ambassador did not want to rule out the possibility of a royalist plot. The Home Secretary noted that the Inspector General (national chief) of Police would be in touch with the Regional Security Officer about measures to enhance Mission security.

Comment

18. (C) We will continue urgently to press the Prime Minister and the Home Minister for the results of their discussions with Prachanda about the alleged royalist plot against U.S. officials in Nepal. PM Koirala told reporters March 11 in Biratnagar that the GON took its responsibility to protect American citizens very seriously and is committed to making good on that obligation. Post issued a statement March 9

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(emailed to the desk) that demands the Maoists share any information they have with us. The Ambassador reiterated that demand in a March 10 press conference at the close of Under Secretary Fore's visit. While the Maoist claim may well be spurious, until we know more, post intends to maintain heightened security as the EAC recommended.

19. (U) Under Secretary Fore did not have an opportunity to clear this message
MORIARTY